

# Hobart's Doughboy Monument turns 60

By Steve Euvino

There's one highly visible 60-year-old in Hobart with no intentions of retiring. To the contrary, he stands as ready as ever to defend the nation as well as his triangular lot on Main Street.

"He" refers to the Hobart Doughboy Monument which turned 60 in November, 1985. The statue, titled "The Spirit of the American Doughboy," depicts a World War I soldier, underneath which is inscribed the names of military personnel killed in the two world wars as well as in Korea and Vietnam.

The Hobart Gazette reported Aug. 4, 1922 that city fathers two days earlier had accepted a deed from the Earle family for two-hundredths of an acre in triangular form at Seventh and Main Streets. "The city intends to park the tract," the story read.

Three years later on Armistice (now Veterans) Day 1925, the monument was unveiled. The Rev. R. Keene Ryan delivered an address and Hobart Mayor Sherman H. Henderson accepted the statue for the city. The Hobart High School band played "America" and later in the evening a dance was held at the Odd Fellows Hall.

The statue is the work of E. M. "Dick" Viquesney, the son of an immigrant stone-marble carver who settled near the quarries in Spencer, Ind. in Owen County. In a 1982 letter to Hobart Historical Society Museum director Dorothy Ballantyne, T. Perry Wesley, executive secretary of the Spencer Chamber of Commerce, said that Mr. Viquesney followed in his father's trade but went further. "He carved, but also produced a long list of items cast from molds," Mr. Wesley wrote. "He was that rare combination of artist-businessman-promoter."

Among his pieces was an "Imp O' Luck," produced in several sizes with the imp kneeling, in an ash try, a lamp base, and other pieces. Sizes of the imp ranged from an 11-foot creation that adorned the roof of a building erected in 1925 to an imp which appeared on a pendant and a ring.

Mr. Viquesney also produced many military pieces, which Mr. Wesley said were noted for their faithfulness to details, such as in the soldiers' belts, buckles and buttons. Several of these pieces may now be seen in a

Spencer museum.

The sculptor's most famous work, according to Mr. Wesley, was "The Spirit of the American Doughboy." As Mr. Wesley wrote, "I have catalogued confirmed locations in 24 states, 65 locations in all, Maine to Washington, California to Florida." He added that in his collection is a postcard showing one such statue in Hobart. "I contend that this piece may well be the most-seen one piece of statuary in the nation."

Mr. Wesley said that the Hobart statue is matched with three works of "The Spirit of the American Navy" in Fort Wayne and in Clearwater and Palatka, Fla. Many of those doughboy pieces, Mr. Wesley wrote, have either been vandalized or damaged through the years.

Supposedly the doughboy statue had won a nationwide contest sponsored by the American Legion to choose a suitable memorial to this country's WWI soldiers, but Mr. Wesley could never get confirmation of any such award.

As for Mr. Viquesney, he wandered for a while from Owen County and worked in Americus, Ga., the city listed on the base of the Hobart monument. "I suspect (he moved to Americus) for the possible patriotic effect of the name," Mr. Wesley wrote.

Mr. Viquesney built a theater in Spencer, complete with a pipe organ. The theater is still operated under the name Tivoli.

During World War II Mr. Viquesney and his wife drove 20 miles seven days a week so that his wife could play the pipe organ in a servicemen's center in Bloomington, Ind. Mrs. Viquesney died in early 1946. Her husband never recovered from her death and he took his own life in August of that year.

At the time of Mr. Viquesney's death, no one bothered to gather and preserve any of the sculptor's works, so an effort that started around 1950 to collect some of his pieces had its problems, Mr. Wesley said. "No one knows how many different 'doughboys' he may have created. No one knows how many of the 'spirit' he created in life size," he wrote. "No one knows where they all are. I've heard there are 300—which I doubt."

Mr. Wesley said that local people cooperated whenever they had spotted Mr. Viquesney's works in their travels.



Hobart's Doughboy Monument has reached the ripe old age of 60. The statue is the work of E.M. "Dick" Viquesney.